

Energy initiatives called ineffective

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Governmental efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions are generally light on tangible results that benefit anyone besides the politicians.

That was the contention of Chris Horner, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute and author of "The Politically Incorrect Guide to Global Warming and Environmentalism."

Homer, who spoke at the Utah Farm Bureau's annual convention on Thursday, discussed several environmental initiatives, including the Kyoto Protocols and more regional efforts to curb emissions, such as the Western Climate Initiative, of which Utah is a member.

While these types of programs purport to stem global warming, what they actually do is provide a political soapbox to either bash opponents or cheer supporters, Horner said. In essence, they are light on science and heavy on rhetoric.

What real changes are being made in energy efficiency are not the result of these government programs, but because individuals and businesses see real benefits.

"They don't need to be told to save energy, to save money," he said. "People reduce their greenhouse emissions in their own self-interest."

What the government programs will do, however, is cause economic damage because of restrictions on using energies such as coal or forcing unnecessary equipment upgrades to meet new energy standards.

Dianne Nielsen, the energy adviser for Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., said that a key component of Utah's still developing energy plan will be economic impacts. In fact, one of the reasons that Utah joined the Western Climate Initiative was because it produces a lot of energy from coal and wanted to make sure they were included in any energy decisions that would impact the use of coal.

The real benefit will come from energy savings through the plan that help individuals. That is money that "does not go to a government, but stays in the pocket of the person."

The energy savings would also mean that they have better flexibility through which to develop a plan.

"We can forestall the need to build the next power plant," she said. "We buy some time to develop the programs and initiatives that shape our energy policy."

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